

MARCH 2017

ALASKA FISHERMAN'S
Incorporating JOURNAL

National Fisherman

Cape clawed

Massachusetts lobstermen
gear up to manage closures

RUSSIAN BLESSING
Seiners, scientists
build Soviet unions

MAKING WAVES
California monument
honors fishing families



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California captain wary of NGO investment

I am writing this letter to clear up some glaring half-truths, and no-truths, about the Nature Conservancy's role in the California groundfish fishery from your article "Scratch shares" in the July 2016 issue. You see, it was my boat on the cover of that issue, and under normal circumstances I would be very proud to have that distinction (it's kinda like getting on the cover of *Rolling Stone* for a rock band!). But due to some of the content of the article, I am ashamed to have my fishing operation associated with the Nature Conservancy and what they have perpetrated on the California groundfish fishery.

I actually drank the Kool-Aid for a while and participated in their program for nearly five years. But after I became aware of their methods and goals, I could not continue in good conscience and still be able to consider myself a real fisherman. Claims of helping fishermen comply with the fishery's added expense and complication are exaggerated.

The groundfish disaster was manufactured by one-sided science promoted by ENGO PR machines. The proof is the fact that all the species of fish that are/

were considered "overfished" have rebuilt at a rate of five times faster than what they were telling us back in 2000, when the fishery was declared a disaster. It has been determined that some species never had reached overfished levels, as in the case of widow rockfish, canary rockfish, lingcod and Petrale sole. Once the fishery was demonized and devalued by the PR machine, it was easy for TNC to swoop in and buy up permits and boats at a fraction of their true value from fishermen nearing retirement age having to come to grips with the fact that their life's investment was now worth very little.

When the fishery went IFQ in 2011 and the fishing history from the permits TNC purchased became quota, an accumulation cap was put in place to keep a single entity from controlling too much of the quota/resource. TNC was over the cap and required to divest, that is why they formed the Community Fishing Associations to divest the quota to. However, in a back-door attempt to retain control over the quota, each CFA has in its bylaws a clause that mandates all constraining species be allocated to the California Groundfish Collective, an entity that TNC controls.

In other words, TNC is holding the constraining species quota hostage to retain control over the target species quota and force membership in the California Groundfish Collective. This is one of the

reasons the landings in the fishery are so poor. Fishermen see membership in the collective as an added complication and expense to an already complicated, expensive fishery, so they choose to participate in other fisheries rather than join.

The so-called information-sharing app developed by TNC, eCatch, never worked correctly the entire five years I was involved with the California

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Correction: The boatbuilding feature "In good hands" (NF Feb. 2017, p. 22) reported that Elmore Electric of Seattle handled the install of Furuno electronics in the Noyo Dawn. The majority of electronics were supplied and installed by B&F Electronics of Newport, Ore. Elmore Electric supplied all the floodlights and switch panels that were incorporated with the hydraulic system, which was supplied and installed by Puget Sound Hydraulics of Seattle.

What's on your mind? Send letters to Mail Buoy, National Fisherman, P.O. Box 7438, Portland, ME 04112-7438; fax letters to (207) 842-5603; email to jhathaway@divcom.com. Letters may be edited for length, clarity and style.

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Tackling bycatch



A letter from
Sam Rauch

Sam Rauch is the
acting director of
NMFS.

Not everything fishermen catch makes it back to the dock. It's called bycatch, and almost everyone agrees that too much of it can be a problem. Time spent sorting through bycatch means time spent away from fishing. On

a broader scale, it is a waste of a valuable fish product and can be a threat to continued sustainability.

We have a 40-year legacy of working together with industry and the fishery management councils to avoid bycatch whenever possible and monitor it when we can't. We have made good strides to minimize bycatch, but we can do better.

We recently released a new National Bycatch Reduction Strategy, our first update to the strategy in nearly a decade. If some of this sounds familiar, that's good. This time last year, we shared a

draft with you. Your feedback helped to shape the final strategy.

The new strategy lays out objectives and actions to help us more effectively reduce bycatch with existing resources and under current statutory requirements. The strategy does not create any new requirements. It is meant to guide and coordinate our existing and future bycatch work and programs. Next, we will develop implementation plans that build upon and continue to support our collective efforts to reduce bycatch.

We look forward to working closely with you as we move toward development of these plans and their implementation.

NF

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Groundfish Collective. This app is another example of a story TNC sells to donors, but in truth has only benefited those being paid to work on it. This is one of the primary reasons I had to quit the collective. I could no longer allow myself to be paraded in front of donors to help TNC sell a lie. Especially when I am required to have 100 percent observer coverage that I pay for to ensure the data I provide is accurate and truthful, yet TNC, an entity largely responsible for putting my fishery in this position, is held to a much lower standard of truth.

Information sharing has been taking place between fishermen on their own for decades, using the much more reliable VHF radio instead of eCatch. The collective issues annual reports claiming a better bycatch record than that of the fleet as a whole, but in truth the report is just an artfully constructed comparison of apples to oranges. The collective's

record, if looked at as a harvest ratio of target species to constraining species, comparing trawlers to trawlers, falls below that of the rest of the fleet.

Over the course of the last 16 years, fishermen in my fishery have been forced to make significant sacrifices: over half our fishing grounds have been closed; we are required to pay for 100 percent observer coverage; 8 percent of our gross goes to pay for management fees. We have had to endure vast uncertainties and expense in our livelihoods, and our fishery has been demonized based on inaccurate, one-sided science.

The California Groundfish Collective holds constraining species quota hostage to force membership. The Community Fishing Associations provide access to quota, but after jumping through all the hoops to get it, the cost is over market rate. It is all just a story being sold to donors, foundations and the council.

I have been a West Coast Groundfish

trawler for 25 years. In that time, as a result of this manufactured disaster, I have come to have an intimate understanding of the term accountability. Accountability, the way I've come to understand it, means I will be held accountable for all of my fishing decisions, even the bad ones, even to the point of bankruptcy.

I and the other fishermen in this fishery have done an admirable job of rising to this challenge. I am of the opinion that accountability should be a two-way street. It is time for the ENGOs to take responsibility for the crime they have perpetrated on this fishery and its participants. What TNC has done in California is wrong, and they should not be allowed to own quota, not be trusted to meddle in fishery management, and if they keep telling stories like this one they should be required to have observers, too!

Rob Seitz
F/V South Bay
Morro Bay, Calif.



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